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Low-Glycemic Fruits

You may worry that fruits are too high in sugar to fit into your low GI diet. Low glycemic index (low GI) fruits have lower levels of sugar compared to others and are a great option for everyday eating!

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Science-based and reviewed

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Summer peaches, juicy apples, and tangy pomegranates all have one thing in common: all these fruits can fit the bill when craving something sweet. Even though they may taste just as sweet as a candy bar, these fruits have something that many treats don't: a low glycemic index (GI).

Low-glycemic fruits are carbs that don't spike your blood sugar because they are digested and absorbed slowly, gradually increasing blood glucose levels. Plus, fruit contains other nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and fiber that benefit overall health.

In this article, we'll explore what glycemic index means, our top low-glycemic index fruit choices and their health benefits, and which fruits are more likely to spike your blood sugar.

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What Are Low GI Fruits?

Low-glycemic index (low GI) fruits contain less fructose (a naturally occurring sugar found in fruits) compared to others types or fruit juice. They are rich in fiber, which slows down digestion and decreases the risk of “peaks and valleys” in your bloodstream.

It isn't just people living with type 2 diabetes who need to keep an eye on blood sugar. Frequent swings in your blood sugar levels can leave you feeling exhausted, both physically and mentally, and even set you up for insulin resistance. Including low-GI foods in your weekly meal plan can help promote stable blood sugars throughout the day.

The high fiber content also contributes to bathroom regularity, a lower risk of heart disease and certain cancers, may reduce cholesterol, and support satiety.

9 Low-Glycemic Index Fruits You Should Consider

Low GI fruits are assigned a score of 55 or less. The following GI scores have been pulled from the University of Sydney database, a USDA-recognized institution for GI research.[4,5]

1. Oranges (GI: 45)

Oranges have a glycemic index of 45. All citrus fruits, including oranges, are rich in vitamin C, an essential antioxidant and key player in immune function. Oranges also contain calcium, an important mineral to maintain healthy bones, dentition, and nerve function.

Oranges also contain calcium, an important mineral to maintain healthy bones, dentition, and nerve function[6].

2. Apples (GI: 36)

Apples have a glycemic index of 36. Apples are rich in fiber, vitamin C, and contain potassium.

Potassium is an electrolyte that contributes to muscle contractions throughout the body and regulates your heartbeat. It is also involved in the metabolization of carbohydrates.

3. Berries (GI: 28-40)

Berries (strawberry, blueberry, raspberry, blackberry) have a GI range of 28-40. Sour blueberries offer the lowest GI, while strawberries are at the higher end (but still well within the cutoff).

Dark-colored berries are low-carb and rich in anthocyanin, a potent antioxidant compound. They have been linked to reducing inflammation in the body, neutralizing harmful free radicals that wreak havoc on your system, and reducing the risk of certain cancers. Red berries also offer some anthocyanin, as well as vitamin C.

4. Grapefruit (GI: 26)

Grapefruit has a GI of 26. If you've ever tried a grapefruit, you know they are anything but sweet. The sharp flavor is refreshing, and the bright pink fruit is rich in vitamin C and fiber.

If you take prescription medications, you should consult your doctor or pharmacist before eating grapefruit. It can be contraindicated for certain medications, including statins, blood pressure, anti-anxiety, and corticosteroids. If you have any concerns, follow up with your healthcare provider for medical advice.

5. Mangos (GI: 50)

Mangos have a GI of 50. It has a buttery texture and is rich in vitamin A and vitamin C. Both of these essential vitamins contribute to immune function, and vitamin A supports normal vision and eye health.

6. Pomegranates (GI: 55)

Pomegranates have a GI of 55. It contains polyphenols, a class of plant-based compounds that mimic similar body responses as antioxidants.

Current research is being done on the role of polyphenol consumption and lowering blood glucose levels.

7. Pears (GI: 38)

Pears have a GI of 38. The sandpaper texture you feel on your tongue when you eat a pear is fiber.

The high water content, combined with the natural fructose, renders a fruit that serves as a gentle natural laxative that may help when you feel backed up. Pears also contain small amounts of copper and potassium.

8. Peaches (GI: 28)

Peaches have a GI of 28. They are rich in antioxidants and carotenoids. High dietary intake of carotenoids has been linked to reducing the risk of several cancers and cardiovascular disease.

9. Apricots (GI: 34)

Apricots have a GI of 34. They are a good source of vitamins A and C, fiber, and antioxidants like flavonoids. Flavonoids are well-documented in research to support heart health, positively impact inflammation, and even support healthy blood sugar.

High Glycemic Index Fruits You Should Avoid

Overripe Bananas

Overripe bananas, or brown bananas, have a high GI. Where is the extra sugar coming from? Due to natural aging, the organic breakdown of the fruit produces excess sugars.

Most people do not eat brown bananas as a snack. Instead, they are used in baking or frozen and blended into smoothies.

Unripe bananas are a great alternative.[16] The next time you're at the grocery store, try and find bananas that are more green than yellow. They contain less sugar and

should have less impact on your blood glucose levels.

Watermelons

Watermelon has a high GI of 72.[4] Although watermelon is a nostalgic snack that reminds you of fun summer memories, it is wise to decrease your intake of this fruit when summer rolls around again.

A ripe watermelon is high in sugar and low in fiber. The fruit is mainly comprised of water and fructose. Without adequate fiber present to slow down digestion, the sugary water can rapidly enter your bloodstream and increase your risk of a blood sugar spike.

Tip: Cantaloupe or honeydew melon are appropriate substitutions for watermelon. The GI for these fruits is less than 55, and they are both classified as low GI fruits.[1] [4]

Learn More: Is Watermelon a Good Fruit for Weight Loss?.

Low GI Fruits: FAQs

What Is the Glycemic Index?

The glycemic index (GI) is a measure of how quickly a food affects blood sugar levels. Foods with a low GI score have less impact on your blood sugars, causing your levels to rise slowly and steadily.

Which Foods Have a GI Score?

A GI score is applied to any carbohydrate-containing food.[1] These include

- Grains and starches
- Dairy products and milk alternatives
- Fruits
- Legumes and pulses

Is It Bad If I Eat a High GI Fruit?

For most healthy, non-diabetic individuals, your overall health should not suffer if you consume a high GI fruit, but try to keep track of portion size and how often you eat them.

Gaining awareness of high GI fruits and knowing they can impact your blood glucose levels is a powerful asset. You are equipping yourself with the knowledge you need to make nutrition choices that will support your long-term health goals. By prioritizing low-GI fruits over high-GI fruits, you are one step closer to achieving those goals while satisfying your sweet tooth!

How to Add More Low GI Fruits to Your Diet

- Decorate your morning toast with fresh berries instead of jam
- Add oranges and strawberries to your lunch salad
- Snack on apple and natural peanut butter
- Top high protein cottage cheese with cantaloupe slices
- Sprinkle cinnamon on mango for a light dessert

Tip: Pick low glycemic snacks throughout the day. They will provide energy and satiety until you arrive at your next meal.

Are Canned And Frozen Fruits the Same as Fresh Fruits?

Research on frozen fruits indicates that vitamin retention was unaffected despite being stored in the freezer. Frozen fruits have a longer shelf life than fresh produce and are better suited to certain recipes, like frozen smoothies.

However, it is an excellent practice to review the food label and package before buying a product. Ensure you buy frozen fruits that are marked "no-sugar-added." If present, these sneaky refined sugars will increase the glycemic index and potentially impact your blood sugars.

Canned fruits are another very economical option. Research has shown canned fruits are nutritionally on par with fresh options as long as they don't have added sugar.

Tip: Choose canned fruits stored in water instead of juice. This research analysis shows that fresh peaches have a low GI of 28, but peaches canned in heavy syrup have a higher GI of 58.[4]

Keep Track of Your Blood Sugar Levels

Low glycemic fruits are a great alternative to sweets for anyone looking to optimize their health or support their weight loss goals. Knowing how your body responds to individual fruits can empower you to make healthy choices.

Using a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) can help you keep tabs on blood sugar levels and learn exactly what types of fruits or portion sizes affect your body. For example, plums may cause a smaller spike in your blood sugar than apricots, even though they are both classified as low-glycemic fruits. Or you may learn that dried fruit, like prunes, cranberries, or dried apricots, spike your blood sugar, but whole fruits don't.

The Signos app, paired with your CGM, gives real-time feedback to help you make the best choices. Over time, making small changes add up. Learn more about nutrition, blood sugar, and healthy habits on the Signos blog, or you can find out if Signos is a good fit for you by taking a quick quiz.

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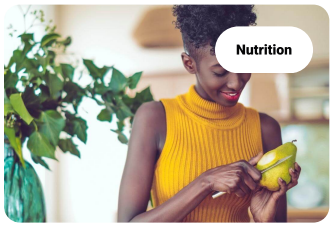

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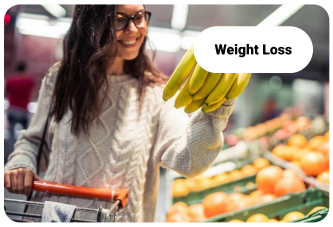

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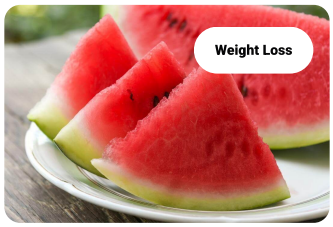

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